

that's why we're down here, because he has raised this to a political debate, not a scientific debate.

□ 1550

And because it's a political debate, what I'm attempting to do over a series of weeks is go around the country and just identify where is high-level nuclear waste stored, and would it be better for that waste to be stored underneath a mountain in a desert, the most investigated piece of property on the history of this Earth. There is no piece of property that has been more studied than Yucca Mountain anywhere on the face of this Earth.

So I know this is hard for some folks to see. We're doing a tally as we go around the country to look at, where are the votes? And we have 27 people, bipartisan, who have said this is where it should go from Washington State; of course, Illinois and Wisconsin, Georgia, South Carolina, Arizona, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Maine, Vermont, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. We have new Senators who have not had an opportunity to publicly either make a statement on it or cast a vote. They're in the middle. We have 27 "yes," 8 unknown. We're going to give them the benefit of the doubt. MERKLEY. FEINSTEIN was a "no" but Fukushima Daiichi and the two nuclear power plants that are on the Pacific Ocean in California and the high-level nuclear waste that's stored in ponds have her in a quandary based upon the representation of that State.

TESTER of Montana, unknown; LEE of Utah; BROWN of Massachusetts; AYOTTE of New Hampshire; SHAHEEN of New Hampshire; WICKER of Mississippi.

Bona fide "noes": REID of Nevada, HELLER of Nevada, CANTWELL of Washington, BOXER of California, BAUCUS of Montana, KERRY of Massachusetts, and SANDERS of Vermont.

So it's a chance to use the bully pulpit and my position as chairman of the subcommittee to help educate not only the floor, my colleagues, the Speaker, those who are following us, that there's got to be a better way to store high-level nuclear waste than in pools next to Lake Michigan, next to the Savannah River, next to the Pacific Ocean. Surely, there's a better place. And we know there is.

Thirty years of study and research—Federal law says Yucca Mountain in the desert underneath a mountain is probably as good a place as you're going to find, at least in the United States.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. If the gentleman would grant me just a moment. When you said there's a mountain in the desert, or there's I think 131 locations as it exists today, I can tell you I have four of those locations in the 11th District in Illinois. I believe nuclear power is safe, effective, cheap, efficient. But right now there's four nuclear storage waste facilities in the district. That's by the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie. That's by populated areas and towns.

There are a lot of big issues going on in Washington, and this probably isn't at the top of people's priorities, but I would encourage anybody that's watching us right now who sees their senator's name on that board you had up earlier and says, Hey, my senator is a "yea," call and say, Thank you. Encourage that senator if they're unsure. If they have the three yellow question marks, probably call that senator and say, Hey, I really would like to get you onboard with safe nuclear storage. And if they're a "nay," please call them twice. Because we react to what we hear. And if the American people want safe storage—and I know they do—then this is the right alternative.

Mr. SHIMKUS. I appreciate, again, my colleague for coming down for this hour of discussion on really what should be the national policy on high-level nuclear waste in this country.

I didn't get a chance to go through all the areas but I'm going to end with Yucca Mountain versus the San Onofre Nuclear Generation Station between L.A. and San Diego. This is one of the ones I'm talking about. How much nuclear waste is in the desert underneath the mountain? None. How much is on the Pacific Ocean right on the coastline? There's the photo. That's 2,300 waste rods on site. The waste would be stored a thousand feet underground at Yucca. The waste is stored above the ground in pools right on the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean. The waste would be a thousand feet above the water table here. Of course, as you can see from the photo, the waste is right next to the Pacific Ocean. The waste at Yucca Mountain would be a hundred miles from the Colorado River. Again, you can see the waves breaking almost right up to the nuclear generating station between LA and San Diego.

I've gone to Massachusetts. I should have talked about Florida today. I've talked about Illinois. DOE locations like Washington State. There's a lot of nuclear waste defined differently all over this country. Let's do the correct public policy and get it at a single repository in the desert underneath a mountain.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your diligence, and I yield back the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. My name is KEITH ELLISON. I am the cochair of the Progressive Caucus and a Member of Congress from the great State of Minnesota. I'm here claiming time to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus, Mr. Speaker, is 77 members in the

United States Congress who believe that when we say the Pledge of Allegiance and we say liberty and justice for all, that means all—all means blacks, whites, Latinos, Asians, straight, gays, the senior citizens and the youngest among us, people with disabilities and people who are able-bodied. It means the great mass of American people included in "in liberty and justice for all."

The Progressive Caucus believes in economic justice. We believe in civil rights and human rights for all people. We believe that public employees are valuable to our society, and we honor and respect the services that they give to us. We believe that America, with our awesome military power, should use that power to promote peace in the world. We are the ones who called for the U.S. to not go into Iraq. When we went in there, we were the ones to push to get us out. We are the ones who are raising the issues around Afghanistan. And we'll continue to argue the case for diplomacy and for development and to make friends with the world, to be a good member of the international community in the United Nations and under international bodies.

We're not the ones who believe that the world is a scary, dangerous place and we've got to jack up the military as much as we can. We're not the ones who think that the rich don't have enough money and the poor have too much. We're not the people who believe in dividing Americans based on culture and color and gender and urban versus rural. We believe in unifying Americans and having equal rights for all people.

Yes, we are liberal, and we are proud of it. We're the Progressive Caucus.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to deliver the Progressive message. The Progressive message is what we're talking about today. The topic I'm going to address, Mr. Speaker, is going to be jobs in this American economy.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we want to speak as bipartisan as we can, but there's no question that the arguments that we have in Congress have a partisan tone. Therefore, for us to sit up here and say we're all just getting along here in Congress and we don't have a different point of view would be not exactly being straight with the American people.

□ 1600

So we're going to say that the debates that we have been having in the House of Representatives have to do with those of us who believe that we as Americans need to live in harmony with the planet, need to try to cut down our carbon footprint, need to try to diminish pollution. And those others of us—mostly on the Republican side of the aisle—who make the case that, for the sake of industry, we have to sacrifice our health, our lungs, our good clean environment, they're making that case.

We're trying to ask Americans to look carefully at the different programs that are being offered on this House floor and to make a decision: Do you believe that we have a responsibility to the poor? The Progressive Caucus does.

Do you believe that public employees and government brings quality and improves the quality of life for Americans? Not all the time. Government needs to be refined like everybody. But the Republicans and conservatives in this House who make the case that government is the problem, we wholeheartedly reject that point of view. That is wrong. We believe in a mixed economy, where the private sector and the public sector exist to benefit the American people in general.

So we're here to talk about these things tonight, and we're here to lay it on the table so that Americans of all backgrounds, all colors, all cultures, all faiths can make decisions about what kind of America they want. Because there are clearly two different visions of what America is about being offered on this House floor every day for the last year and for the next year, and I think Americans should be able to say, I think this is the kind of America I want. And others who think that rich people don't have enough money and poor people have too much, they can support the Republican program.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about jobs tonight; and, therefore, I just want to make the case that, again, I don't think it's a good idea to always draw the partisan divide, but I think it is important to be honest. And my Republican colleagues just have not—even though they're the majority—have not introduced a single bill for jobs this whole time they've been in the majority.

They will say, Oh, yes, we've brought jobs. We had jobs bills. We had jobs bills. Didn't you see us cutting the EPA?

That's not a jobs bill.

Didn't you see us trying to let cement companies be able to emit more pollution in the air?

That's not a jobs bill.

Didn't you see us trying to let coal companies, electric coal companies be able to put more emissions in the air?

That's not a job bill. That's just saying industry can do what it wants to our lungs.

But a jobs bill to help rebuild America's infrastructure? Haven't seen that from our friends on the Republican side of the aisle. A jobs bill that would help refurbish public buildings like schools, haven't seen that. They don't want to do that.

A jobs bill that would say, Look, you know what? We need to train Americans to be able to do the jobs of the 21st century and to promote solar, wind, biomass, the waves, all these kind of ways that we can live in harmony with the Earth and power the Earth at the same time. They haven't

had any jobs doing that. To make our grids smarter, our electrical grids smarter, they don't want to put money in that. They think that is a waste of money.

The fact is Republicans have not come up with a jobs agenda. I call it the Republican no jobs agenda.

And, you know, it's clear that the government has an important role in terms of jobs. You hear some of my Republican colleagues say the government doesn't create jobs. This is absurd.

Ask any small retailer out there who's trying to make a go of it in their local community. They may have a nail shop or they may have a hair shop or they may sell retail clothing or they may have just a small little business that they opened up. If they don't have any police protection—that's the government—then that's going to cut the number of customers that come to them. That is going to hurt their business. Government helping business to thrive.

Ask a trucker, somebody who may own their own rig or maybe somebody who owns a trucking company. If we don't have public roads, highways and things like that—that's the government—where would their business model be?

The Internet. Think about Google. Think about all of the wondrous economic activity associated with the Internet. Well, the Internet was started by the government—yes, it was.

I'm telling you that, whether it's the National Institutes of Health coming up with lifesaving innovation and funding important basic research or whether it is the Food and Drug Administration giving Americans confidence that when they buy that product it's not going to kill them, the government helps business thrive. It helps the market operate properly so that we don't have caveat emptor, so that the buyer doesn't have to beware. The buyer knows that somebody somewhere is looking to make sure that the food is edible and the water is drinkable.

Now, my friends on the Republican side of the aisle that say government doesn't do anything to help the economy are wrong.

I was so proud to hear the President discredit the false economic theory of trickle down. What is trickle down? Mr. Speaker, trickle down is the theory that, look, if we give as much money as we possibly can to the richest Americans and we take it from the poorest Americans and the middle class, then maybe the rich people, through investments and stuff, will put money into the economy and maybe it will trickle down and other people will be able to get something out of it. Well, the President said it's an okay theory except for it doesn't work.

The President's right: Trickle down is a failure, and trickle down doesn't work. I'm so glad that the President really helped explain this to the American people. Because trickle down, at

the end of the day, it doesn't trickle down. It just stays up there. And that's why we see so much wealth concentrated in the hands of so few, because Republicans think the only way to make the economy work is to cut all of our health and environmental regulations and to give tax breaks to people who already have more money than they know what to do with.

Some of my Republican friends like to say, well, you've never met a payroll. I met a payroll. I was a small business owner for many years. I was a lawyer and ran a law firm, had to pay my staff. And it wasn't taxes and stuff that I worried about. You know what I worried about? Mr. Speaker, I worried about customers. Could I get some clients coming through the door asking me to write a will, to incorporate their business? Could I get some clients to say, Would you represent me in this accident? Or, I got in a little trouble. Would you represent me in that?

Clients is what I needed. And if my customers didn't have any money, they wouldn't be able to hire me. But if the customers aren't working and the economy is poor and there's no money circulating amongst working folk, my business suffered. And if people were doing well, my business would thrive. You ask any business person: What would you rather have, a tax cut or a lot of customers? They're going to say, Customers. I want customers.

And so this claim that the Republicans make, that we don't need to make sure that the average working American is doing well, we just make sure that the money gets up to the top and it will trickle down, is not true. And I'm so glad that the President made that point today.

We've got to destroy myths around this economy because, again, there are people who tell self-serving narratives. They tell stories and narratives that help them make more money.

I'm sure that the Koch brothers, who have given a lot of donations around and who own this big refinery and make a lot of money, would really like it if we all believed that giving them a huge tax cut and getting rid of environmental regulations was good for the economy. Of course we don't believe it because it isn't true. But we know that if we keep on arguing, that masses of American people will say, You know what? I think it's okay to have unemployment insurance for people who are out of work. You know, I think it's okay to, in an economy like this, to extend the payroll tax cut.

Rich people get tax cuts. Republicans like it when rich people get tax cuts. They don't like it when working middle people get tax cuts. They would rather have just the rich people get them.

But the fact is people are waking up all over America. They're saying, Hey, you know, when I voted last time or I didn't vote last time, I was upset because of the job situation. And my friends on the Republican side of the

aisle didn't get to the business of jobs. They got in here going after the EPA and going after tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. And because of that, you know, things haven't been good.

Now, I will give President Obama some credit. Because of the good work that he has done, we have seen private job growth continue for about 24 months.

□ 1610

The problem is we have cut the government so badly, and at the wrong time, that State and local governments have had to shed public employees left, right, and center. We are literally seeing gains in private sector employment being offset by cuts in public sector employment, and it's unfortunate that that's the situation that we have.

So today, I'm here with the progressive message. Today we're here to illustrate what's at stake in America today. And this week, thousands of Americans all across the country came here to Washington to raise their voices. They call themselves the 99 percent. And I have to say, it's starting to feel like the people's House around here.

I had a number of folks in my office who came on a 24-hour bus ride, Mr. Speaker, from my district in Minneapolis, to come tell me that, look, you know, we've got to rebuild America and put people back to work. Infrastructure crumbling, people can work to rebuild it.

They said, hey, look, you know this income inequality is not working. And as you give more and more tax cuts and loopholes to the richest, it just ends up hurting us.

I had to tell them that two-thirds of all American corporations don't pay any taxes at all. Two-thirds of all American corporations don't pay any taxes at all. And I brought in this chart, Mr. Speaker. I pulled this chart out because they were—it was hard for them to believe.

I told them, I said, you know, the companies on this chart that I'm about to show you, you know, show me how much money you have in your pocket, you paid at least as much taxes as these companies, because if you paid nothing, then you paid the same as them. If you got one penny, you paid more than them.

Bank of America paid no taxes. Now, let me tell the story about Bank of America, Mr. Speaker. Bank of America made bad business deals. When you make a bad deal in business, you're supposed to pay for that. You know, things go wrong, people go out of business.

Bank of America, they went and bought Merrill Lynch after this guy, this CEO named Stan O'Neal, ran the company into the ground. They still gave him a golden parachute of, like, several hundred million dollars. And I often joke and say I'd have been happy to run the company into the ground for

just a million dollars. But he did it, they paid him millions to run Merrill Lynch into the ground. And Bank of America bought that company.

And then Countrywide, which is the leading predatory lender, subprime lender, bought them, Bank of America did. Got all these bad mortgages that weren't performing because they were never properly underwritten because people made money by just selling the mortgage and then selling the paper. And it was like a hot potato. Once you sold the mortgage, you got the fees out of it, send it to somebody else to be securitized into a mortgage-backed security. So a lot of those happened.

And Bank of America bought those two companies, and then it started causing them losses. And then they said, America, America, we're going down. Help us, please. And then they called us all together in September and October 2008 and said, we need a bailout, please.

We came up with a bill called TARP and Bank of America got bailed out. Now, the problem is, after Bank of America got bailed out and got back up on its feet somewhat, they paid all their executives big giant bonuses, they laid off 30,000 people.

What? Yeah. That's how they repay the American people helping them out.

Citigroup, another one, paid no taxes. They got saved. They were absolutely going down. They probably are, I don't know, Citigroup is a company with a lot of problems. Paid no taxes.

ExxonMobil. Now these people are making money hand over fist. They are making money. They are very, very, very, profitable. Why? Because you're happy to pay \$3 gas. If you can go pay \$3 you'd be, like, hooray; this is the store I'm going to go to. And you know you see it going up to four. And over the last few years, it's fluctuated between three and four.

Well, do you think that ExxonMobil is not making money on that? They are absolutely making money hand over fist because of that, and yet they pay no taxes.

So, look, the fact is—oh, GE. Don't let me forget about my friends at GE. I think they're the biggest corporation in the world. No taxes. GE pays no taxes.

I'm like, look, you know, GE, we, the government, because we've cut taxes for the wealthiest people, and two-thirds of all corporations don't pay any taxes, we don't have that much money. We're in a position where we may have to cut Head Start, home heating oil program for senior citizens. Do y'all think you could do a little bit better?

And they say, nope, can't do nothing for you. This is amazing. You mean to tell me you've got more—the executives of these companies got more houses than they could ever, ever visit; they've got more lakes that they live on than they could ever water ski on. They've got more \$1,500 Armani suits than they could ever wear. They've got more monogrammed shirts that are

tailored than they could ever put on. They've got more expensive shoes. They travel all over the world. They fly around in jets. And they won't pay nothing, and we've got to then talk about cutting home heating oil, the LIHEAP program, cut the food stamp program.

I mean, how do you sleep at night? It's amazing to me. Shocking. Shocking.

And I'm sure all of them look at each other and they say well, you know, we earned it. You can't tell me that you earned that.

This is—and I'm going to tell you, you know, Mr. Speaker, some people want to say, well, they work hard. No, no. This is not true. What they do is they take all that money that they make, and they come down here and they get us to go argue for loopholes for them, and they—\$50 million is spent lobbying Congress; \$130 million spent giving donations to campaigns.

As of 2008, 94 percent of all candidates with the most money win the election.

And about 261 Members of Congress—and there's only 535 of us—are millionaires. The average worth here is about \$700,000. And let me tell you, I'm not one of those rich guys. I actually live on the money my constituents pay me because I'm working for them 24/7. And yet, you know, I go to the grocery store. I know how much bread costs.

And so what I'm saying is, to whom much is given, much is expected. And if America, Nation that I love so much, has a military which protects us all, has a police department that protects us in our local communities, has a fire department that makes sure that Bank of America branches don't burn to the ground, America, if one of their executives or employees gets sick, the EMT truck, the emergency medical truck is going to come help them and bring them back to life if they can. The roads and the bridges that people drive to work on to all these companies, publicly paid for.

And yet they turn around and say, yeah, you've done all that for us, America; but we've got nothing for you. Zero taxes.

It's wrong. And there should be an Occupy movement to say so.

Now, this is a chart, Mr. Speaker, that I do like to pull out now and again. And I want to say that I actually have no beef with Donald Trump or Paris Hilton. I'm sure they're both nice people.

But, you know, do you really think they need a tax break, Mr. Speaker? I think they're getting along just fine.

I think that some of my neighbors who are firefighters and cops and teachers, or who work at the local bank branch, or who work at the local grocery store stocking up groceries, I think they could use a little help. But I do believe that if Donald and Paris don't get a tax break, they'll manage just fine.

These are the millionaires and billionaires of our society. When we cut

taxes for the richest people, you're putting more money in the hands of these folks. I don't think that's wise public policy.

So my point, Mr. Speaker, is just this: you know, you want to talk tax breaks. We're actually talking about extending the payroll tax deduction so that \$1,500 bucks, you know, could stay in the hands of people who are really struggling.

We asked—in the U.S. Senate there was a bill that said, you know, millionaires, on your first million, we're not asking you for no more taxes on your first million. But on your second million, can we have 3 percent? You know. What do you think?

They're, like, nope, nothing doing.

I said, even if it's going to help working class people, you know? Will you help them?

Nope. No. Can't do it. Cannot possibly do it. It might sap their incentive to work. If we were to help the working class people of America, it might sap their incentive to work, so we can't help them.

□ 1620

Tax breaks for billionaires or tax breaks for teachers, police, firefighters, job training, small business, investment, better schools, clean energy, health care, infrastructure investment, college affordability.

Now, my question is, Mr. Speaker, what are America's priorities? I've got a feeling that they're with these folks down here. I think America would rather help these folk than these folks. Just a wild guess.

So that's all we're asking for. This payroll tax deduction, you know, \$1,000, \$1,500 in the pockets of people who really need it. We asked billionaires and millionaires to pony up just a little more. They wouldn't even notice it, wouldn't have to cancel any of your country club memberships. But they said no.

There is a loss of civic virtue among some of our most privileged Americans, but I'm proud to tell you about a group of guys and women called the Patriotic Millionaires. They came to a forum that the Progressive Caucus organized last week, Mr. Speaker, and the Patriotic Millionaires said, You know what, you've invested in research which we used to make our products that made us rich. You invested in roads and bridges and education that we used to help make us rich. And we love America more than we love all that money, and we're here to pay taxes.

And then some smarty-pants Republican said, Well, if you want to pay extra and you're rich, you can. I'm sure the Treasury will accept your checks. And then one of the Patriotic Americans said something really wise. He said, You know, America is not a charity. America is all of our responsibility, and that's what taxes are.

I'm here today, Mr. Speaker, to argue that taxes are the dues we pay to live

in a civilized society. Taxes are not a punishment. When they talk about tax relief, really, from what, from good schools and clean water? When they say "tax burden," I mean, let me tell you.

If you want to live in a society where there's no taxes and therefore no public services, you could move to Somalia. That's what it is. No government. I don't see any of our friends who love—I call them the free market fundamentalists—I don't see them running to Somalia, moving to Mogadishu.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say quite frankly that on this Thursday night in this great country, in my view the greatest country in the history of the world, Americans have a question before themselves. Are we going to choose community, choose each other, or is it going to be a selfish pursuit where everybody is only on their own? I view America as people who would look out for each other, even the least-to-be.

Americans don't think that helping seniors who are on Social Security is a bad thing to do. Americans don't think that helping the poor and the sick is somehow a bad thing to do.

In fact, one of the things that illustrated this national debate we're having, Mr. Speaker, is something that happened in the United States Senate today, the other body.

Today, I can't blame my friends in the House, my Republican friends in the House. They didn't do this one. But today, Republicans in the Senate voted to block President Obama's appointment of Richard Cordray to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Now, look, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau came about because of the massive failure of decency on Wall Street that resulted in all of the foreclosures and America having to bail out the likes of Bear Stearns, and Bank of America and a whole bunch of others. And they said, look, you know, a mortgage document can be very complicated, and we just want to have a bureau that will try to make these things simpler so people know what they're signing up for; a bureau that will say you've got to say what the interest rates are going to be, you've got to say what the terms are going to be so that we can have transparency.

Actually, the real free marketeers around here would never be against more information and better and more effective information going to the consumer. I mean, Adam Smith, the one who wrote—oh, my goodness, I can't believe I can't remember the name of that great book—but the one in which he describes the invisible hand and how markets move and people operate and their individual interest yields the economy. He said in that book that consumer information is key to a good market operating. So I don't know why people wouldn't want a good market to operate.

But anyway, Republicans in the Senate—can't blame the House members

this time—like to claim that the new Consumer Financial Protection Agency would be reformed before it gets a new director. They say they won't even allow it to exist. They won't allow it to have a director until they change it. Well, we had a vote and it came into being. So now they're trying to wreck it before it even gets up and running.

The truth is that these folks who are against consumer protection and the lobbyists that support them are trying to water down our new consumer watchdog's power so they can't hold Wall Street and predatory lenders accountable. And that's too bad. They don't want anybody to be the new cop on the beat protecting all Americans against these predatory lenders.

I've always said, look, if you're offering a good financial product that helps people and is fair, why would you be afraid of a little transparency? Only if your business model is based on bilking and cheating customers would you want to fight against a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Without an enforcer and without real powers to crack down on predatory loans, we will keep on seeing mortgages that are designed to fail from the very beginning, tricking people with the fine print, cheating consumers to make a quick buck.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see that Republicans are ready to take the time. I'm happy to yield it. I'm going to yield back the balance of my time in just a moment.

But I just want to say that America was a good idea. America is a good idea. But it's an idea that you have to fight for; and the idea of liberty and justice for all living in a fair, prosperous economy is something that Americans all over this country have to stand up for and assert because if we leave it to the big guys, to the 1 percent, to the people with all the money and all the dough, they're going to snatch this great American Dream away from us.

With that, I yield back the balance of our time.

THE SPECTER OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I go into my prepared remarks, I would like to point out that I personally have opposed all of the bailouts and the hundreds of billions of dollars that the Obama administration has channeled to different financial wheeler-dealers and cronies, like Goldman Sachs and the others that have received so much money as directed to them from this administration, just to put it on the record.

Many of these so-called corporations that my colleague just pointed out, if